

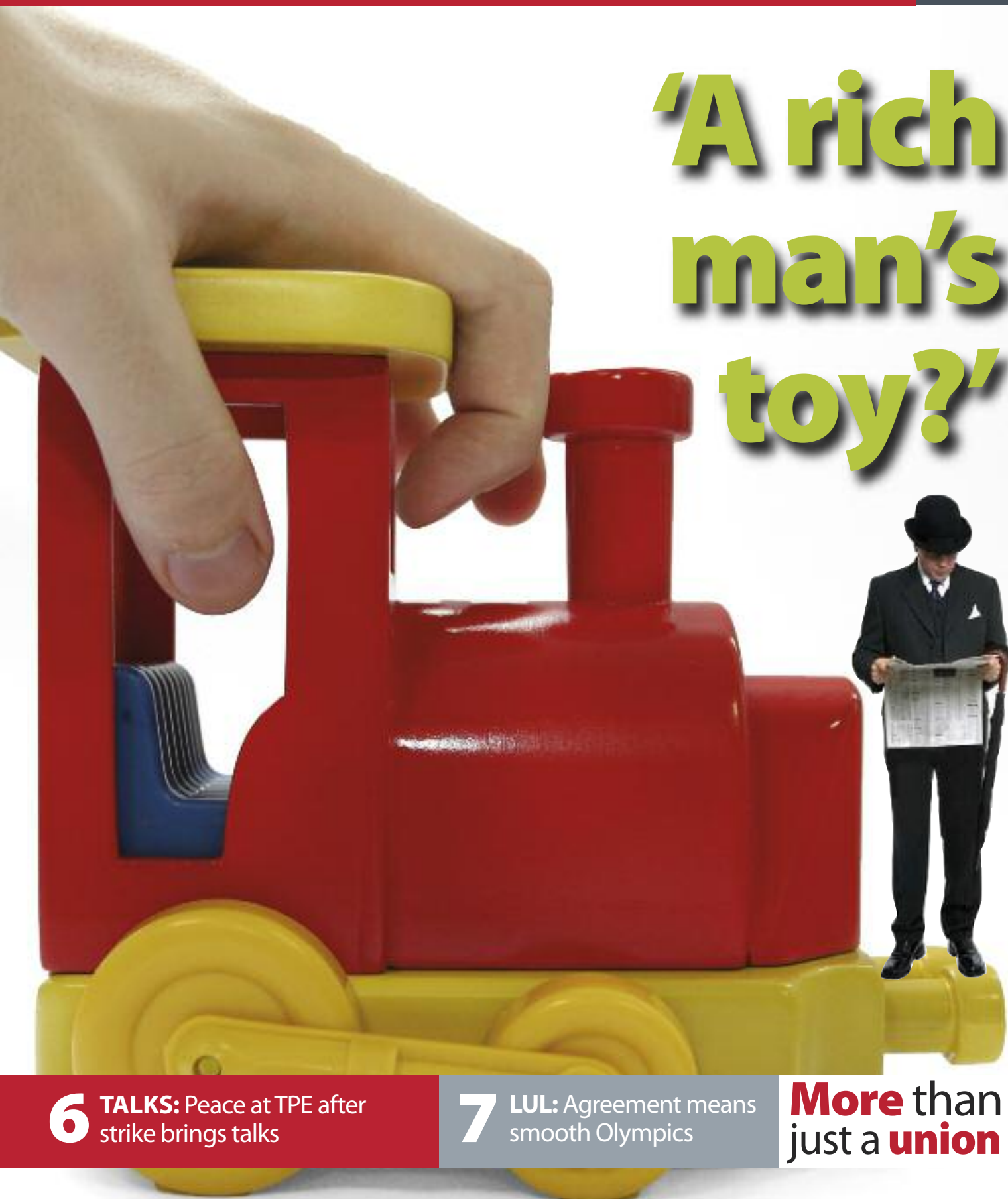


ASLEF

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JOURNAL
OCTOBER 2011

'A rich man's toy?'



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Rail as a plaything for the rich

P HILIP HAMMOND, the Secretary of State for Transport, complained to the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport last month that the costs of tickets is making the railways 'a rich man's toy'.

It's not often I am speechless: but this was one of those times.

Mr Hammond is supposed to be the government's transport expert. The man leading UK transport into the future. Yet all he can do is complain.

There lies the nub of the problem. It is an admission of the fact that he has no control over the UK railways. His party, in the John Major years, gave away government influence when it sold the industry. It is a delusion to think you can sell something and still have control over it. If you flog your car, you can't tell the next owner how fast you'd like him to drive or where you'd like him to park. It has gone. It is no longer yours.

And yet that lesson is only now, 18 years after the great train robbery, beginning to dawn on the minister. He can huff and be horrified at what has happened – but he can do nothing about it. Not unless he takes back the franchises when they end and returns rail to public ownership.

Why would he, a Tory, do that? For the very reason he says: that rail will become the plaything of the rich if it continues to be the property of private companies. Rich companies or individuals don't mind forking out £199.50 for the two-hour ride from London to Manchester, or £225.50 for a single journey from Leeds to Bristol. And if they don't mind paying, the private companies certainly don't mind taking their money.

But the public who elected you, Mr Hammond, don't see the railways as a toy. They see them as a public service. And it is your duty to provide it.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**

Philip Hammond says rail is now 'a rich man's toy'

PHILIP HAMMOND, the secretary of state for transport, last month revealed what he called 'an uncomfortable fact'. The railways, he said, were now 'a rich man's toy' – and some tickets are 'eye watering' expensive. The minister said, 'People who use the railway on average have significantly higher incomes than the population as a whole – simple fact.'

He was giving evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on transport when Julie Hilling, the Labour MP for Bolton West, asked him if that trains would become unavailable to people of low or moderate means.

Hammond later tried to play down the significance of his 'rich man's toy' comment, saying that he had simply stated a fact about rail users, but it was undoubtedly a major embarrassment for a minister who earlier this year gave the green light to rail fares rising by an average 8% next year.

ASLEF has condemned that move as 'pricing people off the network'.

In January some fares will go up by 13% as a result of the government's decision to allow fares to increase by 3% above inflation. Regulated fares, such as season tickets, use formulas based on the RPI figure which is 5%. This formula will remain in place for the next three years. Under Labour the fare increase formula – which ASLEF also criticised – was RPI inflation plus 1%,

'It is a scandal that a government minister



Philip Hammond, transport secretary

can think of our railways as 'a rich man's toy', says ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. 'Trains are a vitally important way for working men and women to get to their work. Fares need to be simplified and reduced.'

Trains are also central to communities, the economy and the environment. The job of government is to make sure they are not a rich man's toy, but a working person's right.'

Extra costs for season tickets in January will include

- Brighton to London Victoria - increase of £256, total cost: £3,200
- Oxford to London Paddington - increase of £328, total cost: £4,432
- Chester to Manchester - increase of £182, total cost: £2,462
- Leamington Spa to Birmingham - increase of £101, total cost: £1,365



No winner in first round GS ballot

There are now two candidates in the race to become ASLEF's next General Secretary. Under the union's rules, a winning candidate needs to secure 50% of the votes cast, and the result of the ballot announced on 19 September shows that none of the three candidates achieved that total. As a result, the third candidate – Nick Whitehead – has now dropped out leaving just Simon Weller and Mick Whelan.

Ballot papers for the run-off will be posted to members' homes probably about the same time as this Journal arrives.

In the first ballot Mick Whelan secured 3,284 votes, Simon Weller attracted 3,115 and Nick Whitehead got 799.

The turn-out in the first ballot was 42.9%.

Simon is the union's National Organiser and Mick is the District 6 Organiser.

● DIRECT TRAINS TO GERMANY 'WITHIN TWO YEARS'

Direct rail services from London to cities in Germany and Holland could be in operation by 2013 if a formal application by Deutsche Bahn (DB) to run trains through the Channel Tunnel is approved.

The German train operator is the first continental rail company to express an interest in competing with Eurostar on the line since it was opened up to other operators in January 2010.

● ASLEF BACKS CABLE THEFT ACTION

ASLEF is warning that the lives of rail workers and passengers are being put at risk as a result of cable theft on the railway system. The union is backing an petition (<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/406>) calling on the government to prohibit cash transactions in the scrap metal trade.

Cable theft last month near London Bridge station led to 146 cancellations and 840 delays during the peak travel period. Network Rail said that between 2010 and 2011 there were some 1,000 cable theft incidents and that repairs and compensation have cost £16.5 million.

● BRANCH LINE PASSENGERS DOUBLE

Small rural rail lines have seen a huge rise in popularity over the last few years, according to figures published by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC).

Numbers of passengers travelling on branch and Community Rail Partnership lines have almost doubled, with 40 million journeys now taking place each year. The fastest growing routes connect to seaside resorts, reflecting the tendency for people to choose to stay at home and holiday in the UK. The peak time for these journeys is during the summer months.

● CONSULTANTS POCKET £19M FOR THAMESLINK TENDER

While the protests about Siemens being awarded the Thameslink rolling stock contract were raging, the fact that over £19 million was handed to consultants over the operation went relatively unreported.

John McDonnell MP asked the government which external consultants were contracted to advise his Department on the (a) design, (b) tendering and (c) award of preferred bidder status – and how much they had cost the taxpayer. This is what he unearthed:

£ million	(a) Design	(b) Tendering (1)	(c) Award of preferred bidder status
Arup	2.53	2.86	0.14
Booz and Company	0.22	0.49	0.09
Freshfields	2.44	5.31	0.18
Interfleet	0.16	1.49	0.02
PWC	0.77	2.26	0.26
Total	6.12	12.4	0.69
Total	19.2		

(1) Tendering relates to evaluation. Note: These figures exclude VAT.

Day's action gets talks rolling at TPE

PAY talks at Transpennine Express came back on track after a day's industrial action last month. A second strike day was cancelled when management agreed to reopen talks. In those subsequent discussions management made an improved offer which union negotiators felt able to put to members in a ballot.

The talks moved into a dispute stage when ASLEF's 300 members who drive trains for First Transpennine Express voted overwhelmingly for strike action: over 91% voted to back strike action on 24 and 26 August.

The day before the action began Nicky Whitehead, the ASLEF official leading negotiations, reported that management had turned down a union offer to suspend the action to allow talks to continue, possibly with the involvement of the conciliation service ACAS.

We felt we were making progress and offered to continue discussion, but the company said they had made a final offer and had nothing else to say, Nicky said. 'So the action went ahead.'

Action on 24 August was solidly backed and late in the day management reconsidered its decision to end the talks. They reconvened the following day and sufficient progress was made for the union to suspend further action.

The revised and improved offer was put to the members in a secret consultative ballot and



Everything was stationary at Hull!



York gets behind the action (Photo: The Press, York)

overwhelmingly accepted shortly before this issue of the Journal went to press.

Keith Norman expressed the union's thanks to members in the company for the important part they played in securing a fair pay deal. 'Without that backing the issue would not be resolved,' Keith said, adding that it was especially significant as other unions had settled for a lesser deal.



As the sign on the van says, the strike was a watershed moment!



Battle of Cable Street remembered

The union has made a donation towards the costs of a programme of events and exhibitions marking the 75th anniversary of the 'Battle of Cable Street'. This was the day in 1936 when the East End rose in unity to stop a force of uniformed fascists led by Oswald Mosley from marching through its streets.

The commemoration of this day, and the pledge to continue to struggle against racism, fascism and all forms of hate crime, will take place in Wilton's Music Hall, Graces Alley E1 8JB on Sunday 2 October from noon until 10pm. The old music hall (which is well worth a visit in its own right) is just off Cable Street. Further details can be found on the website www.cablestreet75.org.uk

CONFERRING ON SAFETY HAZARDS

- a report from Simon Birtwistle

I ATTENDED the 2011 Hazards Conference with fellow ASLEF delegates Pat O'Rourke and Steven Chatfield. Hazards is one of the world's leading health and safety campaigning organisations.

Opening the conference, John Bamford explained how the Hazards campaign developed and how its work complements the work of the TUC. Linzi Herbertson then introduced the work of Families against Corporate Killers (FACK), and updated delegates on its latest activities. She lost her own partner through an accident at work, and spoke movingly about the effect this had on

the mental and physical health of both herself and her children. An example of this corporate killing in our own industry is the Potters Bar disaster, which resulted in no convictions and a £3million fine. At the time Keith Norman said, 'It is ludicrous that seven people died, but the managers responsible for rail safety walked away unscathed.'

Sanjiv Pandita from the Asia Monitor Resource Centre in Hong Kong gave a wide survey of health and safety in Asia ranging from Australia to Bangladesh, which doesn't even count industrial work-related deaths, let alone prevent them. We were also urged to think carefully before buying items like sports branded clothing which is frequently subcontracted to Asia and produced by cheap unregulated labour in dangerous factories.

This was followed by Simon Hester, a Health and Safety Executive inspector and member of the Prospect union. He argued that redundancies in his sector proved that the Con-Dem government is ideologically driven, saying that if they cannot legislate weaker health and safety laws, their successive cuts can make it impossible to enforce existing laws.

Each ASLEF delegate took part in different workshops, which covered diverse subjects including musculoskeletal injury, drugs and alcohol testing, work and cancer, improving workplace inspections and body-mapping. It was useful to meet people from many other walks of life and to share experiences from a variety of different industries in both the public and private sectors.

Cambridge offers no defence for English League

reports ASLEF's
Floyd Doyle ...

I WAS proud to show the ASLEF flag at a demonstration in Cambridge protesting at a rally in the city by the far-right English Defence League (EDL). But equally I have to say how disappointed I was that posters I put up in the FCC drivers' mess rooms at Cambridge and Kings Lynn were regularly taken down, especially as even management had agreed to them being displayed. I say now, as I said then, that if the EDL have a democratic right to protest – then the same applies to counter-demonstrators.

We met in Cambridge market square in the late morning and after speeches from Unite Against Fascism and Richard Howitt MEP we walked through the town centre. I'm delighted to say that tourists and shoppers alike cheered and applauded us. Some joined us, swelling our numbers to around 2,000 – and that was the police estimate. As there was a family festival in the nearby Parker's Piece park, the police limited the EDL to the market area. They were heckled and booed and the obligatory scuffles ensued, but as there were only around

300 of them, they were well contained by the police.

We walked through the backstreets to show the locals that we value having a multicultural community, with our objective the mosque in Mawson Road. This is just off Mill Road which has always had a mix of nationalities living side by side. Many of the shop owners came out to applaud us and the mosque brought us water, samosas and cake. We were also invited back for a curry in the evening!

We ended our journey at another Cambridge park, Petersfield, with more music and speeches. The harmony was only halted for a short while when a group of the EDL made an unsuccessful attempt to cause trouble at the mosque.

The organisation of the day was excellent. It included groups of five people – one including ASLEF's Ben Ford – who moved around the city looking for signs of group activity from breakaway EDL supporters.

All in all, it was a good peaceful counter demonstration. It showed, in the words of the chant, 'We're Cambridge, United - We'll never be divided !!'



Floyd Doyle makes ASLEF's presence felt at the anti-EDL rally



Above: Local residents came out onto the streets to offer food to protesters

Right: Ben Ford stands shoulder to shoulder with Floyd



Welsh rally marks first national rail strike

ASLEF played a full part in the events in Llanelli marking the centenary of the first national strike on the UK railways - and the murder of two bystanders by the army in the town. Our union provided the Chair of the 1911 Llanelli Railway Strike Committee, former Swansea branch secretary John Rossiter, and one of the speakers, current executive member Brian Corbett.

It was on 19 August 1911 that troops fired on workers in the industrial dispute, the last time they have done so on the British mainland. The rail strike marked a genuine rank-and-file revolt over low pay while railway companies were making massive profits.

The events this year took place to 'ensure these remarkable events

are not wiped from our working-class history and to call for an official apology from the Home Office for the killings' and included not just the rally but several days of poetry, theatre, film, music, talks and discussions.



The two murdered men: Leonard Worsell (left) and John 'Jac' John



A commemorative stone was erected by the local trades council and Labour Party: Photo D. Kittay



EC member Brian Corbett addresses the rally. Photo D. Kittay



Retired ASLEF activist John Boreham chaired the Strike Committee. Photo D. Kittay

HOUNDS ON THE LINES

Andrew Hudd, Chair of ASLEF's Bristol branch, appeared on the BBC's 'Points West' programme last month after a pack of hunting hounds were filmed chasing a fox on the main line from Exeter to London. Andrew was responding to film showing about a dozen hounds milling over the track shortly after their quarry had trotted off in the direction of the capital.

Anti-hunting groups claimed the incident could have led to a serious accident, while the Countyside Alliance predictably dismissed it as 'an isolated incident'.

When the BBC approached the transport police they were told that as no people had been on the track, no offence had been committed.

Local animal welfare campaigner Chris Gale contacted the Journal to say, 'This is an appalling state of affairs as it seems train drivers and the public can have their lives put at risk by hunts and no action will be taken.'

Deal promises a smooth ride for the Olympics

says ASLEF Trains Council Rep
Finn Brennan ...

AFTER almost six months of talks, an agreement for the operation of the train service on London Underground during next year's Olympic Games was finally reached on 9 September. The agreement means that services will run until 4am for the Opening Ceremony and up to 3am at other times during the Olympic and Paralympics games.

As we have come to expect, the deal immediately came under attack from the usual suspects. Rent-a Quote Tory MPs - who days earlier had been bleating about the need for the super rich to be given tax cuts as an incentive to 'create wealth' - now said that train drivers were being bribed to come to work! And some activists in another trade union claimed it was unfair that only Train Drivers were to be rewarded for the temporary productivity concessions we had agreed.

(I have always found it difficult to understand those who claim to be socialists while arguing that train drivers' hard work should be used to reward management grades and those who drive desks in 55 Broadway).

The negotiations that led to the agreement were long and difficult. Your ASLEF team were told that we were 'holding the games to ransom'. There were even threats of a 'nuclear option' and emergency legislation to ban strikes. We refused to be bullied or intimidated. We had a clear set of

negotiating objectives and we were determined to achieve them. We have succeeded in doing so.

The agreement, which covers 27 July to 9 Sept 2012 only, and cannot be used for any other occasion, ensures that every driver employed by LUL on 26 July will receive a one off payment of £500 irrespective of the duties you are rostered to work and including those on annual leave or sick leave. For the Opening Ceremony all duties that work past 01:30 on 27 July, including rostered nights, will receive an additional payment at the hourly rate for all time on duty plus an extra payment of one day's pay.

For the rest of the period, any late turn that is rostered to finish after 01:30 will receive an additional payment at the hourly rate for all time on duty. We have also agreed that on Saturday and Sundays only, duties can be rostered up to 9 hours plus a 30 minute meal break. Any duty that exceeds 8 hours plus meal break will also receive an additional payment at the hourly rate for all time on duty, or at the overtime rate if it finishes after 01:30.

There will be no change at any time to the maximum driving spell of 4 hours 15 or the maximum time on duty without a break of 5 hours 15. Duty allocation will be done by local reps in the same way as for bank holidays and over Xmas. All of the payments to drivers are separate from, and will be in addition to, any Olympic



bonus that is agreed to be paid to all staff. Unlike the agreement negotiated for Network Rail infrastructure staff by other trade union there is not a 'no strike clause' as part of the agreement and ASLEF will continue to represent and defend our members throughout next summer just as vigorously and professionally as we do at all other times.

The response from branches and members to the agreement

has been overwhelmingly positive. Your Trains Council team are grateful for the support we received from local reps and from EC member Terry Wilkinson and District Organiser Steve Grant that helped us to achieve what we all believe is an excellent deal, both for our members and for those wishing to enjoy the many pleasures London will have to offer during the 2012 Olympiad.

● Full details of the agreement are available at www.aslef.org/lul

DB Schenker 'underhand' as ballot papers go out

Temperatures rose in DB Schenker last month as members began to vote in a union ballot seeking endorsement for industrial action in the company. General Secretary Keith Norman said that 'the company's dark arts' section had moved into overdrive.

Several drivers from a number of locations contacted ASLEF's head office complaining at managers circulating rumours and giving briefings which were 'a good deal wide of the

truth'.

They were claiming that the dispute was over a single individual case - which Keith said was 'blatantly not the case'. They also told drivers that the union's full time officer, Nick Whitehead, was responsible for the dispute and that he did not have the backing of the Company Council or the membership. 'This is blatantly false,' said Keith Norman. 'The ballot was called by elected representatives at both

company and national level. The national executive had no hesitation in making a unanimous decision to instigate a ballot when they received reports about the company's discipline record.'

The company also published lists of drivers' names on its internal internet with managers' assessment of which way they would vote - until ASLEF solicitors insisted it was removed.

Staying on at work – retirement age becomes flexible



Victoria Phillips
looks at the
abolition of the
default retirement
age and the implications
for train drivers ...

THE Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations 2011 came into force on 6 April 2011. The regulations abolished the default retirement age (DRA), meaning that an employer can no longer dismiss someone by retiring them unless they can 'objectively justify' doing so.

So unless an employer can justify the dismissal by showing that it was not an arbitrary decision but one based on, say, a genuine business need, it will be both unfair dismissal and age discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Employers also cannot refuse a prospective worker a job simply because they are within six months of retirement age.

Abolition of the DRA has been portrayed by the government and in some sections of the media as a positive new employment right that will prevent employers discriminating against older workers and forcing them onto the scrapheap in their 60s. But there are important implications for workers in safety critical industries that unions and employers will need to consider.

Collective agreements and contractual terms are likely to need to be considered and possibly renegotiated.

65 NO LONGER THE END OF THE TRACKS

Crucially, the abolition of the DRA does not mean that the employer cannot retire an employee under any circumstances.

ASLEF has negotiated collective agreements in many train operating companies which include provision for employees to be dismissed for retirement at a particular age (normally 65).

Even if there is no collective agreement, contracts of employment will usually state what the normal retirement age is - and may provide that the employer can terminate employment on reaching that age. Train drivers' contracts of employment frequently

state that the normal retirement age is 65. It is worth noting that ASLEF has long had policy that drivers should be able to retire at 60.

After October this year if a train operating company dismisses a driver at 65 by retiring them, in accordance with their contract and the collective agreement, there is a possibility that a member can claim to have been unfairly dismissed and discriminated against because of their age.

The issue will be whether dismissal at that age can be objectively justified by the employer. This will depend on whether or not the dismissal is in legal terms 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. In the rail industry a 'legitimate aim' would be, for example, the need to maintain safety. An employer might argue that allowing someone to continue driving beyond 65 would be unsafe. Certainly there are additional costs of insurance and health checks as workers get older.

PROTECTION FOR YOUNG AS WELL AS OLD

A company might also say that drivers' continuing to work beyond 65 prevents them as an employer from planning the workforce and being able to make jobs available to younger employees. It is often forgotten that age discrimination legislation protects both older and younger workers - so it is perfectly legitimate to balance the interests of older and younger workers.

Although these have been established in law as potential 'legitimate aims', it is not enough for an employer simply to state that they are. They must show that the legitimate

aim is 'proportionate' in order to justify dismissing an employee at retirement age. An employer will therefore need to provide evidence both that the aim was legitimate and that the measures taken were proportionate.

'Proportionate' will depend on the balance between the discriminatory effect and the reasonable needs of the business. Factors including whether the retirement age was collectively negotiated with the union, the cost of continuing to provide the employee with service related benefits and the cost of insurance for older drivers may all be considered reasonable.

SAFETY PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE

Of course a medical might be enough to justify retiring a driver on safety grounds. If the employer can show that they acted reasonably in dismissing an individual on grounds of capability or ill health then it will not be unfair dismissal or age discrimination.

Employers' advisers are suggesting that it will be difficult for employers to justify a retirement age. But European case law suggest that it may not be as difficult as envisaged as retirement ages in Germany of 68 for dentists and 60 for pilots have both been found to be justified.

There is certainly a strong argument that safety critical jobs should have a lower retirement age as long as the facts support that age. Alternatively an employer could maintain a retirement age for drivers and offer alternative duties after that age, if they are worried about unfair dismissal claims.

One of the factors that the European Court has taken into consideration in its consideration of cases is whether there is a collective agreement with trade unions supporting a particular retirement age. If there is, it is a strong factor pointing towards justification, although the absence of a collective agreement is not fatal to an employer claiming justification.

ASLEF will want to revisit collective agreements and agree a retirement age, including how workers reaching that age should be treated. The law is in a state of flux and it may be many years before it becomes clearer.





Why the Union backs High Speed Rail



Last month we published four letters from members that were critical of plans to develop High Speed Rail – the HS2 project. This month Alan Donnelly, the President of ASLEF's executive committee, responds by outlining the reasons why the union supports the initiative ...

I AM writing this article on behalf of the Executive Committee in response to the letters published in the September Journal in relation to our policy to support High Speed 2 (HS2).

It is without question that this project is one that will be of significant cost, irrespective of the various figures quoted. There is also no getting away from the fact that ASLEF is always at the forefront of campaigning for improvements and investment to our industry.

Your Executive Committee took the decision to support HS2 for a variety of reasons. Primarily, it offers significant employment and investment with real

opportunities for greater capacity on a network which is projected to run out of capacity. It is of interest that none of the correspondents appear to recognise, or have forgotten, the opportunity this will create for freight operators, providing greater network capacity on a key route which has seen DBS remove trains due to pathing problems, something that is desperately needed to support another of our campaigns 'freight on rail'. Sadly, the approach to rejecting such significant investment would not see the money spent elsewhere in the industry but more likely disappear - leaving the UK rail in further decline which is in stark contrast to our European Counterparts.

NOT A CASE OF EITHER/OR

Whilst all the points relating to maintaining, upgrading and improving the existing network infrastructure and rolling stock are fair ones, we have to recognise that this was not an 'either/or' option. The rail industry as it stands is being drained by the privateers who seek to maximise their profits at the cost of the tax payer and this government will do nothing to improve that situation.

ASLEF has proudly campaigned, with success in many areas; let's not forget campaigns such as 'Take Back the Track'; 'SQUASH' and more recently the 'McNulty' report and Bombardier for example. We have campaigned to see 'obstacle detection' and full barriers at level crossings and the industry is beginning now, to move in that direction.

The arguments for and against this project will no doubt create debate which is positive in many respects but we should not shy away from the fact that technology is constantly evolving and we must move and adapt our skills with the times or risk being left in the forgotten land with our heads in a bucket of sand.

SAYING YES TO PROGRESS

Let's not forget either that we already have high speed rail in the UK, operating both domestic and international services. Should we have said no to that and continued with using existing lines? I'm sure if we looked back to the ASLEF Journals of the time there would have been many letters expressing the view of how backward we were at not having high speed rail and now we have the opportunity for it again we cannot grasp the concept.

Perhaps our fore-fathers should have rejected electrification and dieselisation for the same reasons that are being voiced in opposition to HS2: reduction in driver numbers, auto trains, invest it elsewhere or perhaps we should take the view they took – that if you do not embrace new technology and work with it then passengers will look for alternative forms of travel and ways of working and your industry will die.

A DEMOCRATIC DECISION

There appears to be some misunderstanding of how ASLEF operates and it is therefore important to clarify that ASLEF and its policy is dictated by the membership through those they elect to sit as delegates to the Annual Assembly of Delegates and on the Executive Committee, who are in turn, accountable for their decisions through a variety of forums in addition to the electorate.

We are a strong industrial trade union with a long history of campaigning on issues of particular interest to our membership and the wider rail industry. We cannot shy away from that responsibility and 'sitting on the fence' or blindly calling for change, that in reality only makes us look good but achieve nothing, is not what where we believe the membership aspire to be.

Tory-Run councils spend over £1million opposing HS2

Local councils are spending over £1,175,000 of taxpayers' money to oppose the Government's plans for high-speed rail in spite of cuts and government guidelines, according to research by Graham Evans, the Conservative MP for Weaver Vale. He names the district councils of Aylesbury Vale, Cherwell, Chiltern, South Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire, Warwick and Wycombe, the county council of Buckinghamshire and the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Mr Evans has complained to local government finance watchdog the Audit Commission because he believes the councils' spending has contravened rules on local government publicity and lobbying set out by Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles earlier this year.

The rules state that councils should not run campaigns using taxpayers' money to influence the view of the public on a particular public policy - which potentially makes the expenditure illegal.



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The unions can help Labour save itself



As ASLEF delegates prepare to set off to Labour's Conference in Liverpool, Gregor Gall, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Hertfordshire, considers the Leader's relationship with the unions ...

In June Labour Party leader Ed Miliband announced his plans to reduce the influence of affiliated unions on the party policy-making at annual conference as part of a 'modernisation' strategy. This was at the same time that he condemned the strike over pension cuts that month by members of the ATL, NUT, PCS and UCU unions.

The irony that Ed - rather than his brother David - was elected to the leadership of the party with the crucial backing of affiliated union members cannot be lost on observers.

Attacking the union affiliates - which includes ASLEF - for holding 50% of the delegates at party conference, Ed Miliband castigated 'late-night deals thrashed out in locked meeting rooms by a handful of people'.

Again, the irony will not be lost on observers that Miliband has just gained the support of MPs for his desire to abolish the annual elections to the shadow cabinet. Under this plan, Miliband as party leader would be entitled to appoint who he sees fit.

NOT THE BEST RELATIONS

The clear message is that the affiliated unions are seen as embarrassing relatives at a family gathering. The only thing the unions seem to be good for is financing the party when it is facing an election or up to its eyeballs in debt (as it continues to be). Of course, this is still an embarrassment as dependency on the affiliated unions has increased as the party's business friends deserted it in recent years.

The source of Miliband's anguish and his desire for union bashing is fundamentally that he is choosing to be a prisoner of the media and the agenda of the media is that of being anti-union. This means Miliband believes he cannot be seen to be a friend of the unions because to do so would be to be seen as too left-wing - and this would lead to unpopularity amongst the populace.

What ramps all this up in Miliband's mind is that with the prospect of wide scale union resistance to the government's spending cuts in the public sector, he must doubly distance

himself from the affiliated unions and in double quick time too.

Let's engage in some leftfield thinking here.

AN ORGANIC LINK TO SOCIETY

Say Miliband fell out of bed one morning and the bang on his head changed his view on the matter of affiliated unions. What would be the virtues of either agreeing with or supporting the policies of the affiliated unions?

The 15 affiliated unions represent some three million union members and those who pay the political levy to the party through their union amount to more than a million members. So the virtue is that unions are an organic link to a large mass of citizens, certainly many times more than Labour has as individual members. In other words, they are a democratic boon and not a liability.

This means, and no matter any deficiencies in their internal workings, unions have the strongest claim of all to speak on behalf of their members and working people overall.

But there is another crucial aspect here to consider. Opinion polls show that on just

about every social and economic issue, the vast bulk of populace is to the left of the mainstream political parties. These polls show that people want protection from the market and its disastrous outcomes, whether in the fields of health, housing, education or employment.

Guess who have policies that are in tune with these views? Guess who may have influenced people's views on these issues?

PEOPLE ARE LEANING TO THE LEFT

Well, it's no great surprise that the answer to both questions is 'the unions'. So if Miliband wanted to be not only compassionate, popular and principled to his alleged values, he could do a lot worse than listen and agree with the unions.

This would be a far better way to renew and regenerate Labour. Reducing the influence of the parliamentary Labour Party - that is the 200-300 MPs - in the electoral college would be another good way. Currently, those MPs have a third of all the votes in electing the party leader. Restoring annual conference as the sovereign policy-making body would be another so that it stops being an annual jamboree-cum-rally.

Instead, Miliband is proposing that non-members - as registered individual party supporters - should have an influence on policy and electing party leader. He is also proposing to give National Policy Forum members a fifth of the delegates at annual conference.

But first he would need the unions to agree at the Labour Conference to reduce their own influence. And turkeys vote for Christmas.

It would be a great service to our society if the affiliated unions used this opportunity to take back the Labour Party to its original values and mission. This would help pull politics in Britain back to the left and isolate Cameron's coalition.



NOT 'WHAT WE WANT' 'HOW DO WE GET IT'

A fringe event organised by ASLEF at the annual TUC Congress in London was concerned less with defining the type of railway we would like to see, and more with what we need to do to achieve change. Leading the discussion were Diana Holland, the Assistant Secretary of Unite and the Labour Party's Treasurer, Stephen Joseph, the executive director of the Campaign for Better Transport and ASLEF's National Organiser Simon Weller. National President Alan Donnelly was in the chair ...

W'E'RE all agreed that we support public ownership of the railways,' declared Diana Holland as she opened the meeting. 'We repeat the same thing at the TUC year after year. What I want us to discuss is how we make it happen. How do we involve people from outside our circle to fight for a railway that is run as a service rather than a business?'

First, she argued, we need to expose what the McNulty Report means for ordinary peoples' links and communities. 'When it comes to fragmentation and deregulation – which is what McNulty is about as far as passengers are concerned – my union has a great deal of experience with the bus industry. We know what is wrong with it – and what we need to do to make it right.'

'There are two attitudes towards transport,' Diana said. 'Those who love it, and those who simply want to get somewhere. And when people talk about cuts they think about health and education, but not local government and transport. So how do we push attacks on transport fares, services and concessions up the agenda?'

ASLEF IS BACK ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL

FOR the first time in a decade, ASLEF has a seat on the General Council of the TUC. Simon Weller was elected by a healthy margin in the 'smaller unions' sector.

'I am delighted,' he said after the result was declared. 'Our union deserves a place at the top table.'

Diana says we need to stop having theoretical arguments and expose the practical effects on communities; we need to argue for a service rather than simply point out individual financial effects; and then we need to bring groups together. 'We all have retired union members who are skilled campaigners who will argue against concession cuts. We know groups representing people with disabilities who will be affected. We can involve people engaged in manufacturing. We can involve local politicians.'

'Let's do that – and make public transport a real hot potato!'

MARGINALS HOLD THE KEY

Stephen Joseph insisted that rail needed to be democratic – 'open and affordable to everyone'. But this was not going to be the case, he warned – and soon passengers were going to find out. 'Fares will increase as regulation is eased,' he said. 'When they are asked to pay much more for their tickets and season tickets, then we will see real anger,' Stephen declared. 'Our task is to harness that anger and turn it into something positive.'

Stephen stressed that the hardest hit would be passengers in high commuting areas – like the Medway towns, Reading and Shipley in Yorkshire. 'And the important thing for us is that all these locations are key marginal seats. They are places we can have influence.'

Stephen stressed that business groups were as concerned as commuters about severe fare rises because of the effect it would have on them. 'We need to involve them in our campaigning,' he declared. 'McNulty suggests making peak fares even higher to limit capacity at that time. But are employers going to be happy to see their staff wandering into work at half past ten?'

'The way the government is acting on fares is



A thoughtful group of activists enlivened a useful fringe meeting

madness. Passengers also have covert fare rises when they are faced with machines that never get you the cheapest tickets. Things like this are critical in engaging the wider public.

'We need to reach out beyond our own comfort zones and build new alliances.'

WE KNOW THE TIME AND PLACE

Simon Weller said we needed to be asking how to work with other groups and end union isolation. 'And we can do it,' he insisted. 'There is evidence in places like Bristol. We need to think again about rail user groups, voice our concerns and bring people along with us without undermining our own position.'

TUC Congress –

The union was engaged in two main debates on transport and both were accepted unanimously by the delegates. The first expressed major concern about the proposals from the McNulty Report which the government will use as the basis of its future rail policies, and the second concerned the effect on the UK workforce of Bombardier not being given the Thameslink project

McNULTY OFF THE RAILS

Speaking on the McNulty Report, ASLEF's National Organiser Simon Weller pointed out that the report identifies UK rail costs as being 30% more expensive than on the continent. 'And why is that?' he asked. 'Is it not because our rail is privatised and profits are drained away by shareholders wanting a return?'

He said early briefings by McNulty were akin

'BUT



Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport says the government is foolish to alienate marginal voters. Right: Diana Holland from Unite said, 'Stop the theory, start the practice.'

At the same time we had to develop alternative models of delivering a railway that people want, he said. Simply saying we want British Rail is not enough. We need to think about the detail as well. 'We know how to win – by stretching out and coordinating our ideas. Now we will set about it.'

Next January passengers will be faced with fare rises of 8% and more. That is when we will be in the best position to win them over to our campaigns. 'So we know the time. We know the place. The rest is up to us.'

Unity in the hall

to 'death by Powerpoint' – but if you kept awake there were serious and unpleasant messages.

'We are accused of being old-fashioned because we have secured reasonable wages for our drivers. I'm not going to apologise for that! And McNulty talks of there being 'wage drift' – without mentioning the drift to senior managers that resembles a tidal wave.'

'We restructured after privatisation and secured better wages and shorter hours because we offered productivity and flexibility. We keep being told to 'modernise': that is what we did twenty years ago. It is management and government that hold back the railways.'

Simon pointed out the 'great contradictions' in the McNulty Report – essentially that it identified fragmentation as a major problem, and then proposed more fragmentation like moving control of track and signalling to private

profit motivated companies.

The TSSA General Secretary Gerry Doherty said McNulty was 'Beeching Mark Two'. 'More freedom for TOCs means higher fares, worse services and shut stations,' he declared.

THE DEATH OF BRITISH TRAINBUILDING

The TUC condemned the 'inept' government decision to award the Thameslink rolling stock tender to German-based Siemens rather than to Derby-based Bombardier. Speaking for ASLEF, Simon Weller said this would mark 'the end of train building in the country that gave the railways to the world'.

Simon rejected transport minister Hammond's excuse that it was all he could do under European law. 'It is no coincidence that French contracts go to Alstom, or German ones to Siemens,' he said. He also pointed to the possible practical difficulties of having both Bombardier and Siemens stock in the south-east.



Simon Weller (centre) and Alan Donnelly (right) with Bill Baxter, an ASLEF rep at Southport who volunteered for marshalling duties at this year's TUC conference

Don't underestimate smaller unions, President says

The Association of Educational Psychologists moved a motion at this year's TUC pointing out that craft unions still have an important role to play both in the TUC and workplace in the current age of mergers and super unions. It was a theme taken up with enthusiasm by ASLEF President Alan Donnelly.

'Small doesn't mean insignificant,' Alan declared. 'ASLEF is a small professional craft union – but a few years back we took a case to the European Court of Human Rights that led to a change in the UK law and had implications for every trade union in this country.'

'I'm talking about the Jay Lee case where the European Court unanimously upheld ASLEF's claim that a union is entitled to expel a member for being a member of the BNP, because they have views in direct opposition to those of a trade union.'

Alan also pointed out that members of craft unions tend to identify strongly with their union and very often enjoy high levels of membership.

ASLEF has around 95% of the train drivers in the train companies where we are recognised and this, along with the nature of our members' jobs, gives us significant leverage in rail industry industrial relations. Indeed the agreements we reach very often set a benchmark for the whole industry.

'We regret that in other industries small unions have been marginalised,' Alan says. 'Larger unions should assist their smaller sister unions in situations like that.'



ASLEF's National Organiser Simon Weller (left) and EC President Alan Donnelly were the union's delegates to this year's TUC conference, held at Congress House in London

'Neither has the government considered the knock-on costs of jobs lost down the supply line, nor the losses to tax income that this country will suffer as a result of this decision,' he said.

Alan Moss: head in the air, feet on the ground

It's not an encouraging start. 'I'm more of a background person,' Alan Moss tells me. 'I really don't like doing stuff like this at all. But I got volunteered and had a vision of that scene from the Godfather with the horse if I'd said no!' Happily Alan agreed to meet up at the Train Crews LLC room Piccadilly station in Manchester to take up this 'offer he couldn't refuse' ...

T HERE'S a lot of energy around Alan Moss. He smiles, shakes hands, exchanges greetings and chuckles with a score of people before we get to sit down to talk. There's jokes about staff from Crewe and a manager from Preston, a laugh with a train manager who's been off work because a man fell on him and a trail of drivers popping in. In between, Alan tells me when he was young he didn't want to work for the railway.

'I wanted to be an air traffic controller, but I didn't get through the assessments. It wasn't to be, so now aviation's my hobby. I'm fascinated by anything that flies.

'Woodford, where they built Lancasters and Vulcans, is only eight miles down the road. The buildings are still there, but it shut down last week when the Tories pulled the plug on the Nimrod.

'I first went to air shows there when I was about nine years old.'

TAKING THE AIR IN PICCADILLY

It was no passing interest for Alan. In fact, there is now an aviation group at Piccadilly that has visited a number of sites and shows - including Coningsby, Shawbury, Brize Norton, Lakenheath, Leuchars RAF and BAE Systems at Warton. They have even branched out into Germany and Poland. Fourteen of them went to Gatow in Germany ('Eight are into aircraft

and the rest are into beer!' according to Alan), where the RAF had a border air base and the museum of the German Federal Armed Forces is situated. They've also visited Colditz, where captured British officers were held during the war. 'The escape attempts were astonishing,' Alan says. 'They even tried building a glider under a false ceiling in the bell tower.'

But even this didn't make such an impression as when they went to Krackow last year. They visited the Aviation Museum, but also went to the nearby Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau. 'You see things there you can't talk about,' says Alan. 'All the tour guides have a link to the Holocaust, so relatives of the victims point out heaped teeth, bones, shoes ...

'We did little drinking that night. Our minds kept going back to those camps.'

Alan likes to socialise with people he works with, and regrets that this is in decline. 'New recruits come for a Christmas drink, but don't have that feeling of family. I think management have made some of them afraid of having a drink at all.'

BOXING CLEVER

Alan joined the railway in 1985 on the short-lived Youth Training Scheme. After ten weeks he was offered a job as a Train Recorder. 'I sat in a signal box with a huge brown book at one of those old slanted desks and wrote down the numbers of passing trains!

'But I got to know a lot about the railway. I met signalmen, P-way staff - and, of course, drivers. They were the bee's knees, the ones who walked with a swagger. If they liked you, you were quid's in. They'd often give you a ride in the cab.' Alan chuckles. 'If you did that now, you'd be sacked right off.'

'Anyway, I decided then I wanted to be a driver. They were hard as nails on the outside, but once you knew them they were really down to earth. They'd do anything for you.'



Alan with one of the Virgin trains he takes on the Manchester to London run

During his two years as a 'box lad' Alan badgered a Traction Inspector (known as 'Dr Death') about getting onto the footplate. In 1987 he was told if he went to Buxton the following Monday, he would be started as a second man. It was another 'offer he couldn't refuse', so Alan packed his bags and moved over the Pennines to the Peak District. 'I wouldn't have got another call for years if I hadn't gone then - and it turned out to be the most enjoyable time of my working life. It was the first time I'd been away from home. I learned a lot and grew up quickly.'

CAMARADERIE STILL BREATHING

He was there for three years before moving to Longsight and eventually, by way of Regional Northern, to Virgin where he works now. Most of the runs are to London, with a few to north Wales.

'There's less camaraderie than when I started - and more bureaucracy. I still enjoy it, but I think less and less people do.'

But Alan says railway people can still pull together. 'It's not just on industrial issues. Driver John Young got the ball rolling with the 'Train of Hope' charity that I helped to promote, and the depot's been involved with the shoe-box campaigns of Help for Heroes. Personally, I don't think we should have been in Afghanistan or Iraq, but I've great sympathy with, and pride in, those soldiers who go and fight.'

When Alan began to be involved in the union he says it was 'a steep learning curve', but there were always people willing to help. He went to a branch secretary course at Wortley Hall when he took on that role at

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN or journal@aslef.org.uk

Regional North, but the aspect of union activity that has always been 'almost an obsession' is health and safety.

ANYTHING BUT THE MAIL!

'I know some health and safety stuff is mind-bogglingly boring, and you're always getting banter off the lads. 'Hello Alan – are there enough lamps in the loo?' That sort of thing. But it's good natured. We all know that if passengers think the railway's not safe, then the industry's dead.'

With the assistance of regional organiser Colin Smith and encouragement of Kevin Lindsay, Alan has been the driving force between an annual meeting of safety reps in the area that has been a great success in exchanging experiences and stopping reps feeling isolated. 'I can say with confidence that our safety reps on Virgin West are professional and diligent,' he says. But he's got less kindly things to say about the media.

'My pet hate is the Daily Mail,' he says. 'They belittle safety with snide stories about kids needing goggles to play conkers. Most of these stories are lies. Safety's a vital issue and it's criminal to scorn it like the Mail and others do.'

The phone rings and we're distracted as Alan starts bullishly sorting out a parking problem with a manager. The exchange concludes with him declaring, 'I like to work on the basis of common sense on this job.'

He puts the phone down and smiles. 'Fat chance,' he says.

He then returns to his pet theme. 'If our drivers weren't proactive, we couldn't be effective. I get sent photos or messages about risks, and then we can do something. Our drivers know the union will take it up.'

FINDING SOLUTIONS

Alan says his attitude to this, and to most things in life, is 'not to have obstacles, only solutions'. As far as the union goes, his main



Alan has been involved with the **Train of Hope** charity event that peaked with the rail tour at the start of this month



A case on the wall of the **Piccadilly** office shows pictures of the depot's aviation outings



It's plain to see Alan's hobby, even on his office screensaver

principle is 'everything comes from the grass roots, the ordinary member'. 'That's why it's so important that members go to branch meetings. That's how we ensure the union goes forward together and we're ready for change.'

On a personal level, Alan's got a major change coming up in his life later this year, when he's due to become a father – on Halloween! 'That might slow down my



Alan in front of his favourite aircraft, the plane he calls 'the **Mighty Vulcan**'. 'It gives me goose bumps when I see it fly,' he says



One of the depot 'jollies' was as guests of the **US Air Force** at **RAF Lakenheath** in Suffolk

gallivanting,' he concedes. And perhaps quieten the house down – Alan's a great fan of bands like Def Leppard, who he's going to see before the birth, and Queen, who are the best band he's ever seen. 'Even in a huge arena, Freddie Mercury could interact with people at the very front and the far back,' he says. A great collector of old vinyl records, Alan says his perfect day out is 'an air show, a couple of old music shops – and a few shandies!!!'

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The **October 1911 ASLEF Locomotive Journal** included an article about a proposed forerunner of ACAS, and explained an outline plan for a federation of rail unions ...

MR CROOKS' LABOUR DISPUTE BILL

"Naturally, a good deal of interest has been taken in Mr Crooks' proposed Bill for the settlement of labour disputes. This measure, which is backed by Mr Arthur Henderson, Mr George Barnes, Mr Fenwick and Mr Enoch Edwards, has already encountered a

considerable amount of adverse criticism. In order that readers may form their own judgement as to the merits and demerits of the Bill, we give, in the following paragraphs, a summary of its chief provisions. At the outset, we may say that the object of the Bill is to settle by means of "Boards of Conciliation and Investigation" (to

be appointed by the Board of Trade), all labour disputes as to which the parties thereto cannot themselves come to an agreement. It is proposed that these Boards shall consist of three members: one appointed on the recommendation of the employer, one on the recommendation of the employees and one on the recommendation of the members so chosen."

SUGGESTED SCHEME OF FEDERATION OF THE RAILWAY SERVANT'S TRADE UNION

"We have pleasure in giving you herewith a draft of the Scheme of

Federation as suggested by Mr A Fox, General Secretary. The Scheme is:

1. To organize the railwaymen, without whom we cannot succeed as necessary in their interests,
2. To remove any friction,
3. To prevent friction in the future,
4. To provide for collective action and harmony to protect the interests of all.

We claim an honest attempt has been made, and trust for the support and loyalty of our members to give effect to it."

○ Extracts selected and edited by **Dave Bennett**

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Mick's former trainees were pall-bearers at his funeral

MICHAEL ('MICK') WINNETT A JOY OF AN INSTRUCTOR

IT IS with great sadness that I report the passing of Mick Winnett, a former Driver and Instructor at Bedford.

Born in 1942, Mick started his railway career at Kettering as an engine cleaner in 1958 - and was promptly laid off because of shortage of work. He resumed with no loss of seniority three months later, quickly passing out for firing duties. He fired on many turns, including lodging at Toton with ironstone trains.

When Kettering closed in 1969 Mick moved to Bedford where he was made a driver and in 1978 he became an Instructor. He learned the basics of training at Faverdale, passing with flying colours despite the hard regime that ran the courses. He retired as an Instructor in October 2007.

It was always a joy to have Mick as your Instructor as he made learning a pleasure, a skill that so few possess. He had immense knowledge of both rule book and traction and was always called in if a trainee was having difficulties.

Sadly a year ago Mick contracted cancer. We once thought he had conquered the problem but then it returned with a vengeance. He accepted his fate in his own inimitable style and bowed out with good grace and his dignity intact.

Mick's funeral was attended by a huge congregation, including many who had worked with him. As he had requested, six of his former trainees acted as pallbearers and I was privileged to deliver a eulogy of his railway life.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Mick's wife Joan, son Peter, daughter Jane and the grandchildren at this difficult time.

Bill Davies, Retired Members Section, Bedford

STUART MASON A SPECIAL MAN

I wrote about losing Brian ('Cally') Callaghan, a good friend and colleague on Merseyrail, a few years ago. Now once again I have sad news of another good friend and colleague from the other side of the fence, Stuart Mason, a former Operations Inspector and driver at Newton Heath, Manchester Victoria and Southport.

Stuart was well known as an old BR Inspector and whether you liked him or not he knew his job inside out. If you were right he would back you all the way but if you were wrong he would let you know and kick you up the backside. But he would find out why you made the mistake and help you to correct it rather than chastise you.

Stuart retired a couple of years ago as he was getting tired of new technical railway and the end of the 'hands on' approach. He was an ex-ASLEF member from his many years of driving and always attended branch meetings to have his say.

I remember Stuart as a driver when I was a conductor. If he was with you on the old blue square stock you knew you'd get there by hook or by crook because he knew every nut and bolt of the old diesels and was a fitter's nightmare when it came to faults on them. He wasn't the greatest at DIY or computers. His good friend Mike Luke sorted him out so he could fly the world on his flight simulator or hunt down the enemy on his submarine missions!

All Stuart's colleagues at Southport, Manchester Victoria and Newton Heath will miss Stuart, but no one will miss him more than his dearly loved wife Debbie.

I have great memories of Stuart. Once after a Company Council meeting he told Brian Callaghan that he was glad to see the union was finding the reasons for SPADs rather than going along with the blame culture. In the old days we would all go to the Albert with shunter George Rimmer. Stuart would ask, 'What are you having?' and we'd say a pint of lager, a pint of mild and two Hamlets. He always got stung for them. 17 pence, they cost.

I apologise to Debbie for not going to visit Stuart in his last few weeks. I wanted to remember him as I had always known him: a beer-swilling crisp-munching fun-loving friend.

Rest in peace Stuart and god bless you. Our heart-felt sorrow goes to Debbie and all Stuart's friends at this sad time.

Bill Baxter, on behalf of all the staff at Southport

PETER MOORE A TRUE GENTLEMAN

With great sadness I report the sudden death at home of a real friend to all who knew or worked with him. He was one of life's true gentlemen. Born locally, Peter started his loco life at the depot in 1947. He put in 49 years before retiring in 1996 at Manchester Victoria.

Peter served in the Royal Military Police (RMP) in the Berlin garrison. A stalwart of the depot 'tug-of-war' team, he was well known in the North West. He remained a true brother especially in troubled times and was a great example to the younger fraternity. A strong and active member of this local community, everyone knew Peter

who frequently walked his dogs in the Pennines. His true love was the Lake District where he spent much of his spare time walking and cycling with his family. Our thoughts are with them at this sad time.

S. Black, retired members' section, Newton Heath

FAREWELLS TO TONBRIDGE TWO

Alex Mitchells - affectionately known as 'Sizzler' - has passed away at the age of 87. His loves were Tonbridge Football, gardening and the railway which he once left before returning and staying until retirement.

Driver Tony Hollands has also left us, a tough little man who fought asbestosis for four years. Tony, who enjoyed golf, bowls and driving, would always help on committees. I'll miss his help with our annual 'old boys do'.

Our thoughts are with the families of these old friends at this sad time.

Dave Weddle, Reporter, Tonbridge RMS

THANKS FROM ANDY VINER'S DAD

I am writing this letter on behalf of my two granddaughters and myself to thank you and your members for the great turnout for my son Andrew at his funeral. I would like it if you could put a few lines of thanks to your workmates in your next Journal.

The case has still not come to court yet.

Thanking you all.

J. Viner, Andy Viner's dad

Reports, recognition and retirements at Tilbury

TILBURY Branch Chairman Colin Thornhill was pleased to welcome the general secretary, Keith Norman, district organiser Andy Morrison and EC member Nigel Gibson to our meeting on Sunday 17 July.

The GS gave a full report concerning the move of ASLEF's head office to new premises in Clerkenwell and said he was very proud of the way the union's finances are heading.

Andy Morrison then followed up with a full report on the forthcoming round of pay talks for Freightliner intermodal/FLHH. He also spoke about the effect that the Olympics would have on freight in 2012, saying that freight train movement will be severely restricted in and around the London area on the GE and North London Lines in order to let passenger trains run uninterrupted.

Andy also mentioned the cost of diverting the services via the

Cross Country routes from the port of Felixstowe via Ipswich /Ely and beyond - and of course the driver route training that this could involve. Finally he touched on a recent disciplinary case where the punishment meted out to an Intermodal driver was 'disappointing and draconian'.

Nigel started off with a financial report and was just getting into his stride with the McNulty Report when - just like 'Britain's Got Talent' - he was buzzed off the floor! Nothing to do with Nigel's speech, of course - simply that our time occupying the hall had elapsed.

There was, however, time for the GS to present Cliff ('The Captain') Blackwell with his badge to mark 45-years of ASLEF membership. Keith also made presentations to Colin Thornhill, our Branch Chairman, Driver Paul Miles and Alan Gosling, our Branch Secretary to mark their union service.



A good turnout at Tilbury's July meeting

After wishing Keith and his wife Christine a long and happy retirement when his successor is elected, everybody adjourned to the main bar for a glass of ale and an excellent buffet that was provided by Assistant Branch Secretary Steve Wilson and his good lady wife, Margaret.

Cliff Blackwell, Reporter, Tilbury branch



'Captain' Cliff Blackwell is congratulated on his 45 years on the bridge!

Trevor's achievement is recognised – finally!



Trevor – caught by the GS after 40 years!

YOU could be forgiven for thinking that if you had worked for a company for 40 years, it would be a cause for celebration. Not so in the case of Train Operator Trevor Crouchley, who was 'presented' with his long service certificate whilst on meal relief!

Trevor has also been a member of ASLEF for 40 years and his colleagues from Northern Line – North branch decided that this major milestone should be recognised.

So at the August branch meeting Trevor was

presented with his 40-year badge by Keith Norman and Terry Wilkinson, our EC member. It wasn't just Trevor's night however. Another '40 year man', Mick Jaggen, received his badge at the same time and presentations were made to Micky Webster and Bill Meeto (who were both retiring) and to Dave Nixon, Kevin Chown, Finn Brennan and Adrian Kidley who were given long service badges.

After the presentations, the branch laid on a buffet and drinks. Everybody had a great time and it was nice to see a few faces from the past.

Deborah Reay, Secretary, Northern Line/North Branch

General Secretary candidates on show



The three GS candidates – (left to right) Nick Whitehead, Mick Whelan and Simon Weller with Mark Steel (second left) who chaired the meeting

IN ONE of a number of hustings of the candidates for general secretary, District 5 invited the three candidates to address its Council meeting on 15 July.

After each was given the opportunity to make an opening address outlining the difficulties facing ASLEF in the near future, all the candidates gave strong presentations of what they can bring to the position of general secretary.

Then the members became inquisitors, asking all the questions that the candidates must have dreaded most! It shows the quality of all the candidates that they managed to come through the process with their reputations intact.

Summing up, I said it had been a privilege to have all the GS nominees within the same building and that the future of our union looked very positive when we had three candidates who all had the necessary abilities to take ASLEF forward. After the meeting, refreshments were taken in a local hostelry.

Howard Kaye, District Council, District 5



The branch wishes Phil many safe journeys ...

Phil's leaving of Leamington

We at Leamington Spa Branch recently said 'Farewell' to Driver Instructor Phil Richmond, who is leaving us to start a new life with Scotrail at Inverness - a move that he has been planning for some time now.

Anyone who has been around the West Midlands railways over the last 20 years or so will know Phil.

He started on the Railway Training Scheme way back in 1986 with his first job being in the Mailroom at Stanier House in Birmingham. He then became a Railman at Coventry station, before becoming a Conductor at Leamington in 1990.

He secured his Driver's job in 1997 at Birmingham New Street, returning to us at Leamington in 1999. Two year later, Phil became an Instructor.

All his colleagues were very sad to hear of Phil's move to Inverness. He's 'part of the furniture' now - we can't imagine our tiny little depot without his cheery personality around!

The Branch organised a collection and leaving party for him on Sunday 7 August. The fact



Phil's farewell Leamington 'hot dog'

that it was very well attended shows the affection everyone has for Phil.

I know I speak for all of his colleagues, not only at Leamington, but at all the West Midlands depots, when I wish both Phil and his family all the very best in their new life in Scotland. He's a true gentleman, a fantastic friend, and a real loss to our depot.

Here's to you Phil! Please don't forget us!

**Nick Walker, Reporter,
Leamington Spa branch**

Upcoming events

○ GATESHEAD 52A/NERSWA

GATESHEAD 52A/NERSWA's annual reunion will be held in the Gateshead Railway Club Wellington Street Gateshead on 17 November from 13:00. Buffet supplied. Old and new members welcome.

○ YORK RES REUNION

The annual reunion will take place on Saturday 29 October at York Railway Institute from 7- 11pm. As usual all ex R.E.S traincrew are invited to attend along with any others wishing to see old friends. A light buffet will be provided. For further information contact Brian Wallace.

○ GLOUCESTER, WILTSHIRE AND SOMERSET

This reunion will take place on Tuesday 18 October and will celebrate the return to service of 'Derby Four' No 43924 after a 24-year overhaul. Barnwood, Barrow Road and Green Park footplate crews are invited to a day out on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, former Midland Metals. If numbers permit, 3924 will be piloted by Bath's Baby Ivatt 41241. The 06-09 Bath-Glasgow will allow over six hours on the railway with our own train. Details from Mel Thorley, 17 Buttercup Drive, Stockport, SK3 8QF or by phone on 07778 556 760 or 07764 168 570.

○ HITHER GREEN REUNION

HITHER GREEN is holding its 2011 annual reunion on Friday 4 November commencing at 18:00 in the Hither Green Railway and Social club, Beacon Road, SE13. Everyone connected with the depot past and present is welcome to the event, which is jointly organised by the Welfare and Social club and the ASLEF branch.

○ CRICKLEWOOD REUNION

The next reunion will be at the RAFA Club, Ashburnham Rd, Bedford on Friday 7 October from 11:30. For more details contact Grahame Nash (Bristol) or Bob Hodson (Wolverhampton).

○ MARYLEBONE REUNION

Marylebone branch is holding a reunion and social on the evening (Friday 14 October in the Wood pub in Dorset Square (just round the corner from Marylebone Station) from 17:00 onwards. All ex-Chiltern or ex-Marylebone colleagues welcome. For details contact Neil_adams35@hotmail.com or phone him on 07879 241 245.

Waterloo Nine Elms celebrates 90 years service

AT THE Waterloo Nine Elms branch meeting on 5 September, Dave Mortlock and Rod Pepper were presented with 50 year and 40 year badges. Both drivers were 'hard working' Night Link drivers at Waterloo, before retiring earlier this year.

The presentation celebrations were led by EC Member Marz Colombini and Retired Members' Section (RMS) President Tony West.

In his speech Tony highlighted the many

difficulties faced by pensioners today. The meeting, made up of a mixture of current and retired drivers, was shocked to learn that 2.5 million pensioners currently live below the poverty line.

The branch would like to congratulate Dave and Rod on their retirement and also to thank the RMS for attending the branch meeting.

**Mark Prenter, Secretary, Waterloo
Nine Elms branch**



Six of the best at Waterloo!



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER** feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Free market fails rail

UNTIL the railway and all means of production have been fully nationalised, companies such as Bombardier will always fall prey to market forces. Our union should be campaigning for the Labour Party to reintroduce Clause 4, as I believe that the threatened loss of 1,429 jobs at the UK's last remaining train manufacturer is a direct result of the rotten system that prevails.

The free market has failed the British railways and the blame must be laid squarely at the feet of all three mainstream parties.

I would argue that the promotion of a 'fully publicly owned, accountable, nationalised railway' ought to be part of the ASLEF Charter. Perhaps an amendment to rule 3.1(vii) would be in order to omit the word 'generally'. We're either in favour of a socialist society, or we're not.

Steve Richardson, Chairman, Waterloo Nine Elms.

Boxing Day payments

AS A representative for drivers on London Underground who refused to work last Boxing Day for no additional payment or additional time off, I was surprised to be criticised by a fellow ASLEF member (Letters, August). I assume this driver would not normally be expected to work on Boxing Day, but if required to do so, would receive double time and a day off in lieu.

Unfortunately I work for a company that believes that Boxing Day is a normal working day and as such, massively increased the service levels last year. This wasn't to get nurses and expectant fathers to hospital, or allow key workers to clean offices. It was to allow the Christmas sales to start a day early.

When the letter compared our pay and conditions to nurses it repeated the popular refrain of people outside our industry who want to attack train drivers' earnings and drive us down to the lowest common denominator. Surely the issue is not that we are greedy and overpaid - but that nurses are clearly undervalued and underpaid? This is the injustice that needs addressing.

In the meantime the fight will continue

SUPPORT FROM ALL QUARTERS

I WAS the driver involved in a tragic suicide at Beaconsfield station in March last year.

I would like to thank ASLEF and Thompsons solicitors for the help and support they gave to me during this time, and also my colleagues at Banbury for their kindness and phone calls while I was off work.

I would like to especially thank Karin Lynn at Thompsons for her hard work in gaining compensation for the stress and anxiety I suffered because of the incident.

This has been a hard letter to write,

as it brings back many bad memories of that horrid evening. But it has been a great comfort to know that so many people wanted to help me through the ordeal. Apart from my work colleagues and my union I would like to thank the management of Chiltern Railways. They even sent me copies of letters of support that had been emailed to the company from passengers on the train involved.

Thank you all for the support you gave to me from every quarter.

Jim Browne, Banbury Driver, Chiltern Railways

to get fair remuneration for our members who are required to spend Boxing Day away from their families, something that up to this point, our employer has singularly failed to address.

Graham Dean, on behalf of the LU Trains Functional Council

Following John

I WOULD just like to express my gratitude to all the drivers in the Scottish area for DB Schenker for their support in the recent election for the train crew company council.

I know it will be hard to take Brother John Gahagan's place, but it will be an honour to represent you all. Thanks again for putting your faith in me.

Bro Charles Bolton, TCCC, Scotland

Alistair is crossing lines

SADLY after 11½ years of being the branch secretary of Northern Line-North (formerly East Finchley/Golders Green) and the secretary of District Council 8, I've had to give up my positions due to my move to another line and depot. I have enjoyed the many challenges that I've faced in both these positions.

The membership of both my branch and the district have increased during this time, something that was achieved with the

backing of the branch committee, other branch secretaries, the District Organiser and EC member.

They say that the back bone of any union is its members and that is true to a point. But ASLEF has another work force that is rarely seen by many of its members - the admin staff. I would like to thank Alex, Andrea, Beverley and Jenny for all their help through the years. No matter what I asked for they tried to help me, and usually succeeded.

Alistair Reay, Train Operator, Edgware Road

Success through union

I WOULD like to place on record, through the pages of the Locomotive Journal, my sincere thanks and gratitude to the General Secretary - Keith Norman, EC President - Alan Donnelly and EC Vice President - Tosh MacDonald for having allegations against me dropped. I would also like to thank District Organisers Nick Whitehead and Colin Smith and my Driver Employee Council colleagues, both East and West, for all their understanding, support and representation.

But most of all I would like to thank all those loyal members of Skipton branch who have never wavered in their support for both myself and this union throughout this trying and fraught time. You're a credit to yourselves,

both Skipton branch and this union as a whole. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

If anyone wants to know why ASLEF is the best union in this country - and the only one that truly represents its members - then this case is it. ASLEF is there for all of us and will fight on behalf of all its members for what is right and just.

Unity is Strength.

Martin Exley, Skipton Branch

Redundancy under private firms

DRIVER Neil Farm and myself have secured driving positions with Chiltern after a long five months out of work after being declared redundant. I feel I've been treated shabbily by the railway industry as a whole.

Cross Country, although part of the company that made me redundant, didn't offer me one of their vacancies. I guess the jobs went to ASLEF members who already had drivers' jobs. London Midland interviewed me - and then never got back to me.

I went down to Duddleston to meet the Depot Manager - only to find he was in

London for two days. I applied to Freightliner in Carlisle and Dunbar - and didn't even get an acknowledgement to my application.

I feel very let down. Had this happened under BR with a 14A I would have had the pick of any depot! Instead, I found myself out of the industry. I'd like to ask ASLEF what, under privatisation, was put in place to replace the 14A, to protect drivers if they were made redundant? Sweet FA, I feel. What do other members think about redundancy on today's railway?
Peter Ward, Banbury

Rattling tin pot

IN August I became involved in a very heated argument with a member of ATCU, the so-called 'union' over the 2011 South West Trains pay negotiations and about ASLEF's policy. He knows who he is.

During these exchanges he made some very unjust, untrue and malicious statements about our elected officers who represented ASLEF at the pay talks. Similar comments were directed at our LDC representatives, people who do sterling work supporting ASLEF drivers at Fratton depot.

I pointed out to him that if he joined a recognised trade union that was affiliated to the TUC, he would be entitled to have a say in the matter. ATCU is neither, so his membership card isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

ASLEF members have always acted in the proper manner when this individual spreads his lies around the mess room. I'd be interested to know if other branches and members have had trouble with this tin-pot union.

Gary White, SWT, Fratton depot

Did anyone know Arthur Beynon?

MY dear grandfather W.A. (Arthur) Beynon was a GWR fireman in South Wales, then he relocated to Old Oak Common in 1957 to become a driver. Sadly he died in 1983 at the age of 59 in service with BR (W). I would love to hear from anyone who knew him and maybe ask for copies of any photos of him. He was a massive influence to me in my childhood and I want to celebrate his railway career. I have his hat and driver's bag which still contains his mug and the loose leaf tea he so enjoyed. Please feel free to contact me at gbeynon@bigfoot.com
Gareth Beynon, Son

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DRIVER COLLECTS BR33056 SERIES TRAINCREW / DRIVER MANUALS. Contact Lee on 07919127972 or e-mail lippydavies@blueyonder.co.uk



FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



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A VERY LIMITED NUMBER (25) OF THE KING'S LYNN ASLEF BRANCH CENTENARY BADGE (2006) have been reproduced and are available at £10 inc. P & P from M Steele, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX or Telephone 07788 153954.

THORNABY MOTIVE POWER DEPOT REUNION After 50 years the depot now demolished. I would like to inform and invite all members to the first depot reunion to be held in Jack Hatfield Bowling Club Middlesbrough on 14th December 2011 from 13 00hr onwards. For more info call Jim Smith; Tel 01642 823819 Email smith215@sky.com



CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner.

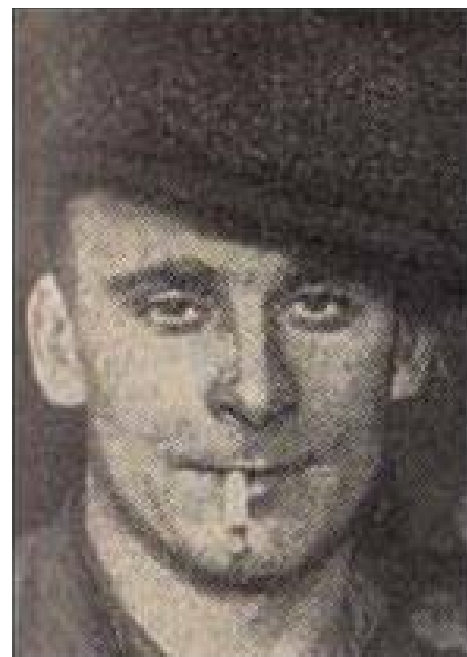
Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.



NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.

The remarkable life of Clem Beckett

Last month ASLEF executive committee member **Tosh McDonald** went to an event in Sheffield's Trade Union and Labour club to celebrate the part British volunteers had played in the International Brigade on the 75th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. Tosh, a motorcycle fanatic, was astonished at tales he heard about the extraordinary life of a man named Clem Beckett. Here Tosh outlines the incredible life of this amazing man – a speedway hero and Wall of Death performer who died fighting fascism in Spain ...



Clem helped form a union for speedway riders

I COULD hardly believe my ears when I started hearing stories and folk songs about Clem Beckett. I thought to myself, 'Surely no one can squeeze that much into one life?'

Born in Oldham in 1906, Clem became a blacksmith when he left school but, as a socialist and member of the Communist Party, he found employers hard to come by in the dark days of the 1920's.

Fortunately, he had another string to his bow. Clem happened to have a remarkable talent as a motorcyclist, and became one of the founding fathers of speedway – a remarkably popular spectator sport at the time. He began this phase of his life in 1928 at

Audenshaw, when dirt-track racing was in its infancy – and he was soon the leading rider of his day. By the end of the year he held 28 records in the sport!

SUCCESS – AND BLACKLISTING

It's difficult to imagine how popular speedway was in those days. When Clem won the golden helmet award at the Owlerton Stadium, no less than 15,000 spectators watched him do it. Clem would often hire a plane to fly to three different events in a single day, and became a celebrity not only in the UK but across Europe. In 1929 alone he raced and gave displays in France, Germany, Denmark, the Balkans and Turkey.

But at the very height of his speedway fame, he earned the enmity of the promoters of the sport, the Auto-Cycle Union. Why? Because, despite his personal success, he could not stand the blatant exploitation of his fellow riders, with inexperienced youngsters being persuaded to race, often with serious or fatal results. Clem helped to form a union to act on their behalf – the Dirt Track Riders' Association. After he began recruiting and wrote an article for the Daily Worker headed 'Bleeding the Men Who Risk their Lives on the Dirt Track', the ACU suspended him. His racing days were over.

DEFYING THE WALL OF DEATH

Undeterred, he moved into show business, inaugurating the 'Wall of Death' in Sheffield, which basically meant defying gravity by driving a bike horizontally around a circular wall. The show was an enormous success both in the UK and across the Continent. In 1931 he was injured performing in front of the King and Queen of Denmark.

The following year he was a great success in the Soviet Union as part of a British Workers' Sports delegation. On his return he began

work at the new Ford factory Dagenham – but he only lasted two weeks as he was one of the first to organise a union in the plant and campaigned publicly about conditions in the factory.

Clem, never the most popular man with employers, then set up a motor cycle sales and repair shop on his own account in Oldham Road in Manchester.

SACRIFICE IN SPAIN

But despite all the success, fame and wealth his dare-devil exploits won for him, Clem remained loyal and committed to his working-class origins, so that when Franco's fascists usurped the Spanish republic in 1936, he offered to become part of the International Brigade. In November of that year he set off to join the anti-fascist forces where he was in turn a mechanic, ambulance driver and machine gunner. He explained why he had gone in the most simple terms and honest way in a letter to his wife. 'I'm sure you'll realise that I should never have been satisfied had I not assisted.'

Clem died in the ten-day battle at Arganda Bridge in the Jarama Valley on 12 February 1937, one of almost 400 members of the British Battalion to give up their lives that day. His friend George Sinfield said that 'as his section was ordered to retire, Clem kept his machine-gun trained on the advancing fascists, acting as cover to the retreat. The advance was halted but Clem lost his life.'

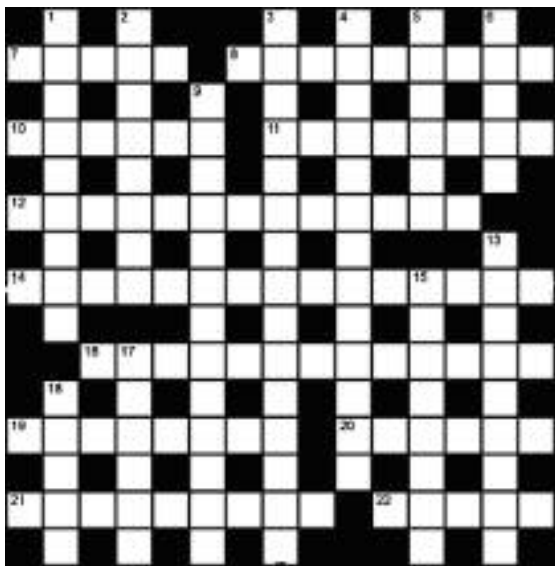
It is ironic that today's racers compete at a big race track in Jarama, a fitting monument perhaps to a pioneer of riders' rights who lost his life fighting fascism at that very place.

Perhaps Clem's widow, Leda, summed up this last adventure in the most touching way when she said, 'He went to Spain to face death because he loved life.' He lived just 31 years.

Is that an astonishing life or what?



Prize Crossword No. 66 set by Zebedee



ACROSS

- 7 Wheeled undercarriage below a railway car (5)
 8 Quickly aroused to anger (9)
 10 Indication required on line (6)
 11 Superfluous pointer ahead of old ship (8)
 12 An undergraduate who is not yet a 'senior' (13)
 14 Cosmopolitan bird of prey aka "Duck Hawk" (9,6)
 16 Drag one's feet on stair-carpet, perhaps (13)
 19 Obtained through intuition rather than from

reasoning (8)

- 20 Light flintlock muskets (6)
 21 Ability to think in or work with numbers (9)
 22 Part of the poem has a jargon ring to it (5)

DOWN

- 1 aka Chinese parsley (9)
 2 European rival at one point seen around (8)
 3 Useful when ascending the Cairngorms (8,7)
 4 Senior officers of the armed forces (6,2,5)
 5 Author, one with a flower (6)
 6 Could be hearing tenor

(5)

- 9 This runner does not have to let off steam (8,5)
 13 Driver's platform (9)
 15 Sporting official who keeps in touch (8)
 17 Early rail or space traveller (6)
 18 Sign indicating subtraction (5)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 65 which appeared in the September 2011 edition of the ASLEF Journal.
 Congratulations to **John Rogers** from **London SW15**

Across 1 Soap and Water 7 React 8 Antacid 11 Unclean 12 Neat Row 13 Annoy 14 Apple Cart 16 Backwater 19 Stale 21 Elegiac 23 Blather 24 Ketchup 25 Noise 26 Easy on the Eye **Down** 1 Saracen 2 Academy 3 Attendant 4 Drain 5 Actuate 6 Natural Break 9 Circa 10 Down the Drain 15 Park Bench 17 Cheat 18 Weighty 19 Seaside 20 Athlete 22 Capon

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 65th ASLEF crossword in the September edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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